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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/644,001	08/20/2003	Takahiro Ikeda	02887.0246	4850
22852	7590	03/01/2007	EXAMINER	
FINNEGAN, HENDERSON, FARABOW, GARRETT & DUNNER LLP 901 NEW YORK AVENUE, NW WASHINGTON, DC 20001-4413			MARIAM, DANIEL G	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2624	
SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD OF RESPONSE	MAIL DATE	DELIVERY MODE		
3 MONTHS	03/01/2007	PAPER		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire 6 MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)
	10/644,001	IKEDA, TAKAHIRO
	Examiner	Art Unit
	DANIEL G. MARIAM	2624

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) This action is FINAL. 2b) This action is non-final.
- 3) Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) Claim(s) 1-38 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) 11-33 and 36-38 is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) Claim(s) 1,2,5,9 and 34 is/are allowed.
- 6) Claim(s) 3,4,6-8,10 and 35 is/are rejected.
- 7) Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) accepted or b) objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) All b) Some * c) None of:
 1. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____ |
| 3) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date: _____ | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application |
| | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Election/Restrictions

1. Restriction to one of the following inventions is required under 35 U.S.C. 121:
 - I. Claims 1-10, 34 and 35, are drawn to image inspection using edge information, classified in class 382, and subclass 141.
 - II. Claims 11-18 and 36, are drawn to removing edges of a voronoi diagram intersecting with the contour of an image pattern, classified in class 382, subclass 266.
 - III. Claims 19-33, 37 and 38, are drawn to searching an edge of an image pattern along a curve, classified in class 382, and subclass 305.

The inventions are distinct, each from the other because of the following reasons:

2. Inventions I and II are related as subcombinations disclosed as usable together in a single combination. The subcombinations are distinct if they do not overlap in scope and are not obvious variants, and if it is shown that at least one subcombination is separately usable. In the instant case, subcombination II has separate utility such as edge removal, and inventions I and III are related as subcombinations disclosed as usable together in a single combination. The subcombinations are distinct if they do not overlap in scope and are not obvious variants, and if it is shown that at least one subcombination is separately usable. In the instant case, subcombination III has separate utility such as image searching along a curve using edge information. Inventions II and III are related as subcombinations disclosed as usable together in a single combination. The subcombinations are distinct if they do not overlap in scope and are

not obvious variants, and if it is shown that at least one subcombination is separately usable. In the instant case, subcombination III has separate utility such as image searching along a curve using edge information. See MPEP § 806.05(d).

3. The examiner has required restriction between subcombinations usable together. Where applicant elects a subcombination and claims thereto are subsequently found allowable, any claim(s) depending from or otherwise requiring all the limitations of the allowable subcombination will be examined for patentability in accordance with 37 CFR 1.104. See MPEP § 821.04(a). Applicant is advised that if any claim presented in a continuation or divisional application is anticipated by, or includes all the limitations of, a claim that is allowable in the present application, such claim may be subject to provisional statutory and/or nonstatutory double patenting rejections over the claims of the instant application.

4. Because these inventions are independent or distinct for the reasons given above and there would be a serious burden on the examiner if restriction is not required because the inventions have acquired a separate status in the art in view of their different classification, restriction for examination purposes as indicated is proper.

5. During a telephone conversation with Richard Burgujian on February 23, 2007 a provisional election was made without traverse to prosecute the invention of Group I, claims 1-10, 34 and 35. Affirmation of this election must be made by applicant in replying to this Office action. Claims 11-33 and 36-38 are withdrawn from further consideration by the examiner, 37 CFR 1.142(b), as being drawn to a non-elected invention.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 101

6. 35 U.S.C. 101 reads as follows:

Whoever invents or discovers any new and useful process, machine, manufacture, or composition of matter, or any new and useful improvement thereof, may obtain a patent therefor, subject to the conditions and requirements of this title.

7. Claims 7- 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 101 because the claimed invention is directed to non-statutory subject matter follows. Claims 7-8 define a computer program embodying functional descriptive material. However, the claim does not define a computer-readable medium or memory and is thus non-statutory for that reason (i.e., “When functional descriptive material is recorded on some computer-readable medium it becomes structurally and functionally interrelated to the medium and will be statutory in most cases since use of technology permits the function of the descriptive material to be realized” – Guidelines Annex IV). That is, the scope of the presently claimed a computer program can range from paper on which the program is written, to a program simply contemplated and memorized by a person. The examiner suggests amending the claim to embody the program on “computer-readable medium” or equivalent in order to make the claim statutory. Any amendment to the claim should be commensurate with its corresponding disclosure.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

8. The following is a quotation of the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

The specification shall conclude with one or more claims particularly pointing out and distinctly claiming the subject matter which the applicant regards as his invention.

9. Claims 6,8, 10 and 35 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which

applicant regards as the invention. Each of the claims recite the limitation applying a lattice animal onto the lattice (generated based on the calculated edge position) based on the weight coefficient. What is the purpose of overlaying the lattice animal (polygon) onto the lattice that is generated on the basis of the calculated edge position? A similar limitation also occurs in claims 3-4. Please clarify.

Claim Suggestions

10. Claim 1 recites the limitation “approximate polygon” in lines 9 and 14. A similar limitation also occurs in claims 9 and 34. The claim limitation would be in proper form if rewritten by replacing the limitation “approximate polygon” with “approximated polygon”.

Allowable Subject Matter

11. Claims 1-2, 5, 9 and 34 are allowed. Please note, since claims 3-4 depend on allowed claim 1, they will also be allowable if the 35 U.S.C 112, second paragraph, issues are cured.

12. The following is an examiner’s statement of reasons for allowance: The instant invention provides an extracting method of a pattern contour, an image processing method, a searching method of a pattern edge, a manufacturing method of a semiconductor device, a pattern inspection apparatus, and a program the allows a computer to implement the extracting method of a pattern contour. Upon acquisition of an image of a pattern to be inspected, the instant claimed invention (defined by claims 1-2, 5, 9 and 34), calculates the schematic edge position of the pattern from the image, and prepares an approximate polygon by approximating a polygon consisting of edges having predetermined direction components to a contour shape of the pattern on the basis of the calculated edge position. Thereafter, the instant claimed invention divides the approximated polygon into star-shaped polygons, and calculates the position of a kernel of the

star-shaped polygon, and then searches an edge of the pattern in a direction connecting the kernel to an arbitrary point positioned on the edge of the approximated polygon.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

13. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure. US Patent Numbers: 4910786, 6181818 and 6868175; and US Patent Application Publication: 2001/0055415.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to DANIEL G. MARIAM whose telephone number is 571-272-7394. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F (7:00-4:30) FIRST FRIDAY OFF.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, MATTHEW BELLA can be reached on 571-272-7778. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.



DANIEL G MARIAM
Primary Examiner
Art Unit 2624

February 27, 2007